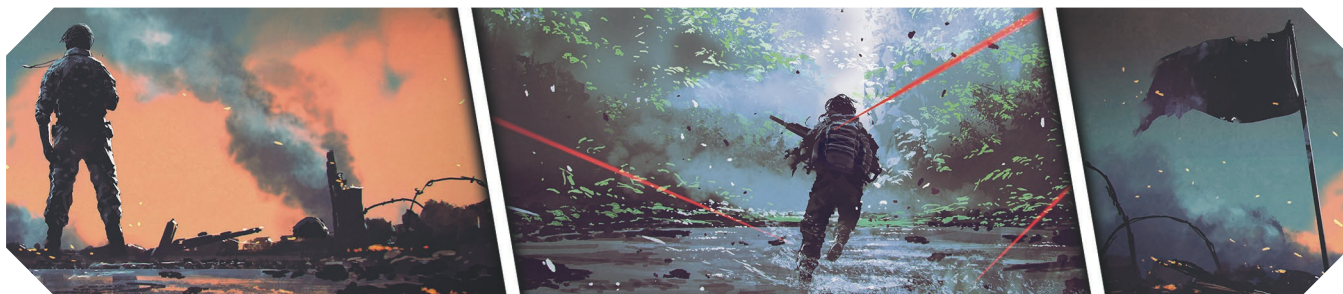


GURPS®

Fourth Edition

ACTION™

MERCENARIES



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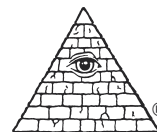
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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

INTRODUCTION

The mercenary (“merc”) as an action hero is a time-honored tradition in both books and films. Mercs are well represented in novels from such authors as Frederick Forsyth and Jack Higgins, and in the likes of *Mack Bolan* and *Able Team*. The soldier of fortune is also a classic character in action cinema – whether it's the crack team of Vietnam veterans in *Uncommon Valor*, John Matrix in *Commando*, Dutch Schaefer and the boys in *Predator*, or Barney Ross and the crew in the *Expendables* series.

GURPS Action 7: Mercenaries provides details on the “merc” genre for use in **GURPS Action**. It examines building a setting and campaign structure, looks at creating merc

characters, and provides how-to advice for GMs running military-themed **Action** campaigns.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

S.A. Fisher is from Arkansas, where he teaches military history. He is a former infantryman and police officer. His hobbies include blacksmithing and gun-making. He is the author of **GURPS WWII: Dogfaces** and **GURPS WWII: Hand of Steel**, and co-author of **GURPS High-Tech**, **GURPS Gun Fu**, and **GURPS Loadouts: Monster Hunters**.

CHAPTER ONE

MERCENARY CAMPAIGNS

The action genre has placed mercenaries in almost every part of the globe over the past century – especially Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. It's worth examining *exactly* when and where mercs are taking contracts and eliminating the opposition, however.

ANYTIME . . .

The default era for **GURPS Action** is TL8. This is fitting for **Mercenaries** campaigns set in everything from late-Cold War “low-intensity conflicts” to the recent Global War on Terrorism. Obviously, there are plenty of settings ripe for merc action, from South American people's revolutions, to African petrol wars, to religious conflicts in Southwest Asia and Eastern Europe.

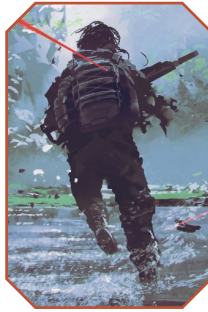
Pyramid #3/8: Cliffhangers pushes **Action** back in time with “Pulp Action!”, which looks at TL6. Action in this era is synonymous with the adventure stories of the 1920s through 1940s. The period is perfect for hardened gunmen seeking employ in small Latin American revolutions or the “grand little wars” among colonial interests in Africa or along the Pacific Rim.

Another golden age of mercenary action is TL7, especially the 1960s and 1970s. The era's bush wars and counterinsurgencies (COIN), particularly in Africa and Southeast Asia, offer perfect settings for mercenary action, but some changes are needed for such campaigns. Reduce the basic budgets – and the value of Signature Gear – to 75% of the values discussed in *Standard (and Not-so-Standard) Issue* (**GURPS Action 1: Heroes**, p. 27). This also affects the dollar values given for *Finding a Client* (**GURPS Action 2: Exploits**, p. 6), *Scrounging* (**Exploits**, p. 7), *Bribery* (**Exploits**, p. 15), etc. *Sample Assistance* (**Heroes**, pp. 24-25) works as described, with minor changes. If the GM feels that a listed time is so short that only cell phones or the Internet could explain it, they can double or triple the wait for assistance to materialize; often, the slower times will make more sense. As well:

- **Cash:** Reduce all dollar amounts by 25%.
- **Facilities:** The best-quality labs and shops give +3 to skill at TL7.
- **Files, Forensics, and Records Search:** These usually involve *paper* files or reports, and slow courier is the only option.

For further details on Assistance Rolls and the adjustments needed for different TLs, see **GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank**.

. . . ANYPLACE



In the context of **Action**, mercenaries generally spend their time on battlefields in remote areas – creeping through fetid jungles and swamps, and roving over icy wastes and desert dunes and canyons. Modern mercs may find themselves in *urban* jungles, fighting through the rubble of deserted neighborhoods.

The GM should consider applying Basic Abstract Difficulty (BAD) to the *entire combat zone* in which the mercs are operating – call this “Combat Zone BAD.” This abstracts the various problems encountered in the remote and austere circumstances where mercs often find work.

Mercs in war-torn developing countries may run into all manner of problems that penalize rolls against Administration, Current Affairs, Navigation, Research, Scrounging, Survival, etc. Combat Zone BAD might be -1 in typical “bad” situations, or -2 or worse in especially harsh conditions (e.g., fighting a rebellion in Cold War Congo, Afghanistan, or Laos).

Mercenaries move around a lot, and thus often deal with travel credentials: passports, airline tickets, visas, employment papers, and so forth. Acquiring these documents can be as simple as paying the requisite fees (typically at least half of monthly cost of living) and waiting 1d+10 days . . . or it may require **Administration** rolls, and bribes and **Fast-Talk** attempts (see *Bribery and Manipulation*, **Exploits**, p. 15) at terminals or border crossings. Weapons are generally provided by the employer and thus *not* carried across international borders. The latter wouldn't be easy; see *Checkpoint Security* (**Exploits**, p. 29) for difficulties the PCs might encounter. If the mercs must equip themselves inside the new country, follow the guidelines under *Assembling Kit* (**Exploits**, p. 6) – but don't forget to apply Combat Zone BAD!

Once in-country, the mercs must link up with their employer and assess the situation on the ground. If the heroes are working as part of an established mercenary outfit, they can expect some support. They should have a good chance of getting help from their unit with Assistance Rolls; most ARs will be at +1 (routine patrols) to +5 (priority mission) when making appropriate requests.

But *PC* mercs are often working by and for themselves! Such independents can expect very little assistance even if it's appropriate, simply because they're so far from anyone who could help them.

MERCENARIES, ACTION-MOVIE STYLE

Using **Action** to create fitting characters for a **Mercenaries** campaign is straightforward, but there are some additional decisions to make.

KILLING FOR A LIVING

While real-world mercs are seldom the white hats portrayed in fiction, **Action** mercs are true-blue heroes. They may work for money, but that isn't their true motivation – they fight for justice!

Making a character that fits into a **Mercenaries** campaign can require careful choices. Fortunately, **Action** templates make this aspect of character creation easy. The obvious options from **Heroes** are the demolition man, medic, and (of course!) shooter. Other templates *might* work, depending on the campaign assumptions; e.g. infiltrator for a recon expert, investigator for an intelligence type, or wheel man for an ace pilot.

When building mercs using **Heroes** or **GURPS Action 3: Furious Fists**, use this new lens.

Mercenary

20 points

You're a hired gun, a soldier of fortune, a professional soldier . . . often just a "merc" in the movies. Your skills are generally less technical and more kinetic than those on the military lens (**Heroes**, p. 5) – you survive by grit, experience, and professionalism, not through gizmos or technology.

Skills: Soldier (A) IQ+2 [8]. • Another 12 points chosen from Gunner (any), Guns (any), Knife, or Parachuting, all (E)

DX+1 [2]; Spear or Throwing, both (A) DX [2]; Camouflage, First Aid, Gesture, or Savoir-Faire (Military), all (E) IQ+1 [2]; Artillery (any), Forward Observer, Leadership, Navigation (Air, Land, or Sea), or Scuba, all IQ (A) [2]; Strategy or Tactics, both (H) IQ-1 [2]; Swimming (E) HT+1 [2]; Hiking (A) HT [2]; Skiing (H) HT-1 [2]; Survival (any) (A) Per [2]; 2 more points in any lens skill to raise it by one level; or 6 more points to raise it by two.

Social Traits: Add Code of Honor ("Stay bought") [-5] or (Soldier's) [-10], Duty (Extremely Hazardous; 9, 12, or 15 or less) [-10, -15, or -20], and Sense of Duty (Unit or Team) [-5] to the template, if necessary, and select -20 points of the disadvantage allotment from them. Optionally, spend some of the template's advantage points (or leftover lens points) on Military Rank 0-4 [4 or 5/level].

The Specialists

GURPS Action 4: Specialists allows more flexibility in character creation – in exchange for more complexity. Consider these guidelines for mercs:

Power Level: The classic **Action** template is 250 points. This works well for a squad-level **Mercenaries** campaign. Thus, the 100-point Basic Action Template (**Specialists**, pp. 4-7) with six modules – skill sets or power-ups – is a good starting place.

Disadvantages: **Mercenaries** campaigns tend to focus on nonstop fighting and small-team action, making Duty (Extremely Hazardous; 15 or less) [-20] a good start. Options like Code of Honor ("Stay Bought") [-5] or (Soldier's) [-10] and Sense of Duty (Unit or Team) [-5] are also fitting.

PLAYING ALONG

Fully enjoying the "mercs" genre of **Action** requires the players to buy into the tropes it offers.

First, action mercs are a study in contradictions. They're both dishonorable and honorable – they'll stab you in the back if they can make a profit, but they'll die in service to their unique code rather than break a promise or betray an employer or a brother merc. They may live the rough life, sleeping in sweltering tents under mosquito netting in Third World backwaters, but they're on a first-name basis with elites around the globe – they can attend an embassy gala or a dictator's dinner with all the class of an Eton schoolboy. And while they're too unorthodox to make it as career soldiers in a proper army, they're far more skilled than any regular troops.

Second, like all action heroes, *mercs are the good guys*. Real-life mercs may have a reputation as thieves, rapists, and murderers, but action mercs are Robin

Hoods – they take only from the rich and give generously to the poor. In fact, they may risk their lives for the unfortunate, delivering medicine to a disease-ravaged orphanage, giving up their take from a mission to rebuild a school, and so forth. Never forget that the bad guys are clearly *bad guys*, and while action mercs may deal out violence in buckets, the fact that they direct this toward the bad guys immunizes them against becoming bad guys themselves.

Finally, action mercs are *winners*. They may be captured, tortured, or severely wounded, but they'll never give up. They'll escape their bonds and blow up the enemy camp on the way out. Even mortally wounded, they'll manage to touch off the charges and destroy the bridge with their last breath. Their missions are frequently formidable – but the mercs are the ones for the job because they're *expendable*.

Skill Sets: **Specialists** recommends three to five skill sets for a 250-point game. *All* mercenaries require basic military training: **Infantry Training**, plus one or more of **Bushwhacker**, **Close-Quarters Battle**, **Goon**, **Physical Training**, **Sniper School**, or **Survival**. As well, action mercs should have one of these specialties:

Communications: **Communications**, **Electronics**.

Demolitions: **Booby Traps**, **Demolitions**, **Explosive Ordnance Disposal**.

Intelligence: **Command**, **Intelligence**, **Mastermind**.

Medic: **Medicine (Medic or Doctor)**.

Recon: **Recon**, **Sabotage**, **Silent Killing**, **Unarmed Combat (Self-Defense or Martial Arts)**.

Weapons: **Heavy Weapons**, **Pistolero**, **Urban Assault**.

Skill sets specific to the environment or to infiltration/exfiltration often prove useful, too – notably **Airborne School**, **Amphibious Operations**, **Desert Training**, **Forest or Jungle Training**, **Mountain Training**, **Underwater Operations**, and **Winter Operations**.

Yet other skill sets *might* be apropos, at least on some adventures: **Area Security**, **Armory**, **Bugging**, **Criminal Past**, **Electronic Surveillance**, **Escape and Evasion**, **Fixer**, **Hostile Extraction**, **Illicit Entry**, **Interrogation**, **Linguist**, **Local Expert**, **Military Pilot**, **Negotiator 1**, **Personal Security**, **Psy-Ops**, **Repairman**, **Safecracking**, **Sailor**, **Security Systems**, **Surveillance**, **Tactical Driving**, **Theft**, and **Tradecraft**.

Most other skill sets better suit espionage, law-enforcement, or criminal capers, and so are *less* likely. These include **Academics**, **Bon Vivant**, **Businessperson**, **Car Thief**, **Chemical Safety**, **Civilian Pilot**, **Cleaning**, **Climber**, **Computer Intrusion**, **Conspiracies**, **Construction**, **Counter-surveillance**, **Cowboy**, **Detective Work**, **Disease Control**, **Femme Fatale**, **Fireman**, **Forensics**, **Impersonation**, **Journalism**, **Law Enforcement**, **Nuclear Disposal**, **Obsolete Weapons**, **Parkour**, **Records Falsification**, **Researcher**, **Resistance**, **Scientist**, **Social Engineering**, **Spin Doctor**, **Toxicology**, and **Undercover**.

HIRE THESE CHARACTERS!

Like any freelancers, mercs can find jobs by advertising their “particular” set of skills. The guidelines under *The Job (Exploits*, p. 6) are applicable; among those, *Opportunity Knocks* is the most common method of hire for mercs in the action genre. Apply reaction modifiers for **Appearance**, **Charisma**, **Reputation**, etc. to these rolls, for heroes who’ve invested in them! Mercs who are hired will sign a contract (p. 6).

Real-life mercenaries throughout most of the 20th century received pay comparable to military service – i.e., Average pay. In typical **Action** games, this type of thing provides useful background color but doesn’t apply to PCs because they don’t take Wealth during character creation (*Heroes*, p. 27). Instead, heroes earn \$2,000/month and ignore cost of living. These mercs typically have complicated fiduciary backgrounds. The salary might be hand-waved as a share of the unit’s loot, blackmail schemes, ties to the black market, etc. Other mercs may declare they’re funded by family business

NEW CINEMATIC COMBAT RULES

These rules are adapted from perks in *GURPS Gun Fu*, but are especially fitting for *all* heroes in *Mercenaries* campaigns:

Army of One: You can shoot machine guns from the hip and fire shoulder-launched missiles while steering a car with the other hand. When wielding a heavy weapon, *ignore* any † (two-handed) or M (mounted) note on its ST if you meet the ST listed for it in the table.

Dramatic Death: You’re guaranteed to go out with a bang! If the dice sentence you to death but not to *instant* death (like an execution or a nuclear blast), roll 1d+1 for the number of seconds you get for a dying action (see *Dying Actions*, p. B423). During this time, you suffer all injury effects except unconsciousness or death, but you can otherwise do whatever you want. Then you die.

Walking Armory: No matter how many guns you carry, their weight never counts as encumbrance. Moreover, you need not concern yourself with the practicalities of how and where you carry them all.

connections, numbered Swiss bank accounts, bearer bonds in offshore holding companies, “conflict diamond” investment portfolios, and equally impressive-sounding financial chicanery. Whatever the case, the GM should accept any reasonable explanation for how the mercs are paid . . . and then use this juicy background hook as a plot point later!

For instance, in the early 1960s, Mad Mike Hoare’s 4 Commando forces in the Congo made approximately the same monthly pay as U.S. forces – about \$300/month. By the late 1960s, however, pay rates increased substantially, to between \$1,000/month for privates and \$1,600/month for experienced officers. This was a handsome wage in Africa at the time. But these were *white*, *Western* mercenaries: British, French, Belgians, Australians, South Africans, and Rhodesians.

By contrast, the CIA mercenary forces in Vietnam, such as the Montagnard tribesmen who worked alongside the super-secret MACV-SOG, were paid \$60/month, which was generous considering it was the same pay as a South Vietnamese army lieutenant. The CIA paid Hmong soldiers fighting the North Vietnamese in the Laotian highlands only \$3/month.

For games set in TL7, divide generic *GURPS* \$ by five to get historical pricing. Keep in mind that TL7 wealth – including starting money, pay, and all costs – is reduced by 25%. For instance, *Heroes* lists \$2,000/month for pocket money, which is \$1,500 at TL7; given as a historical TL7 figure, this would be \$300.

With the Global War on Terrorism, the United States (and other First World nations) began privatizing war, paying private military contractors exorbitant rates far beyond those paid to enlisted U.S. troops, with contractors charging as much as \$3,500 a *day* for security officers on high-threat VIP details. More typical pay rates range from \$500/day to \$1,500/day for elite security operators or pilots – not including bonuses, housing, transportation, and other payouts. These jobs would be Comfortable or Wealthy in *GURPS* terms.

If the GM prefers, heroes may instead take Wealth (see *Pocket Money*, **Heroes**, p. 27). This is perfectly acceptable in the “mercs” genre! After all, poor soldiers of fortune risking it all for a big score is a time-honored tradition. To do this, adjust each soldier’s \$20,000 budget and \$2,000 salary for their Wealth level. Privates through sergeants are Poor to Average, officers are generally Comfortable, and merc unit commanders (or at TL8, top-tier military contractors) might be Wealthy or even Very Wealthy.



WHO LIVES LIKE THIS?

The merc lifestyle can be difficult, if not deadly. Jungle fevers, parasites, tainted food or water, and spotty medical care can all take a toll on mercenary forces. If the GM is assessing Combat Zone BAD (see p. 3), it applies directly to every **First-Aid**, **Physician**, and **Survival** roll. This abstracts how tough the living conditions are “in the field.”

The GM should encourage the merc team to work together, using complementary skill rolls (**Exploits**, p. 5) to cancel out these penalties. Equipment modifiers can offset BAD, too – a suitable shelter, mosquito net, etc. could give up to +TL/2.

In campaigns that strive for a grittier vibe, also apply BAD as a penalty to monthly job rolls!

SO WHAT OUTFIT ARE YOU WITH?

Mercs work for commanders and the units they assemble. While the whole unit might end up destroyed or fleeing, the typical merc mission *starts* with lots of warm bodies, firepower, and support.

THE CONTRACT

When the commander of a mercenary unit signs up with a new employer, the two will negotiate a contract for a specific length of time and a particular fee. Use a Quick Contest of **Merchant** skill to settle such negotiations. The mercs will be paid monthly during the contract period.

Once the deal is inked, the mercs are committed to fight for the employer until the contract expires. Mercs in cinema never seem to suffer much from failing to complete contracts (or even killing their employer, if that person proves to be on the Wrong Side). However, forcing PCs to deal with their Duty or Code of Honor on morally questionable missions is part of the drama of the mercenary life, and shouldn’t be overlooked in a **Mercenaries** campaign. Mercs who violate their contract without a Good Reason should suffer penalties when looking for jobs, and perhaps even gain a negative Reputation.

MERC UNITS

For **Action** purposes, the typical merc unit doesn’t count as a Patron. Instead, mercs use **Military Rank** to make Assistance Rolls (ARs); see **Heroes**, pp. 24-25. Rank costs 4 or 5 points/level, depending on the outfit’s size and relative power:

- The *equivalent* of a 10-point Patron with about \$20 million in assets represents a company-sized unit with a few dozen to 100-200 men, plus a few aircraft, small boats, or AFVs, and some transport vehicles – all at least one TL lower than those of most First World militaries (the typical merc unit uses obsolete equipment). Such an outfit is perfect for PCs who want to make ARs whenever necessary. *Rank cost: 4 points/level.*

- A much more capable unit would be *equivalent* to a 15-point Patron with about \$200 million in assets. This is most likely a global private security firm or private military contractor. While it may have a larger reach – with strategic assets

such as airliners and regional transports, and even leased time on civilian communications and spy satellites – its resources are seldom all within reach of the heroes. In practice, it may look just like a 10-point Patron in each of half a dozen different hot spots. *Rank cost: 5 points/level.*

The descriptions of unit types below serve simply to provide some idea of a merc force’s size and capabilities. They can help the GM determine the ARs possible for a friendly outfit – or the strength of an enemy one. Troop quality varies; skill levels average 10-12 for most grunts, with technical skills at 12-14. Each of these units costs about \$15 million/month when in action, or \$800,000/month if not on an active campaign.

Ground Units

The most basic mercenary outfit is a ground combat unit. A typical example equivalent to a 10-point Patron consists of a company or two of riflemen, some support weapons, and a small fleet of supply trucks and jeeps. It’s supported by a couple of scout cars for convoy or route protection, a platoon of light armor or APCs, and half a dozen or so fixed- or rotary-winged aircraft. The aircraft perform transport, resupply, and recon operations – though in a pinch they could mount a light air strike. Most of the equipment is quite outdated, but in serviceable condition even if it looks a bit banged up.

Air Units

A typical aerial merc unit equivalent to a 10-point Patron is equipped with two basic gunships and four light transport helicopters or planes. Facilities include a command post and a few trucks, along with a platoon of infantry with support weapons to protect the command post and maintenance facilities.

Maritime Units

A typical maritime merc unit equivalent to a 10-point Patron is a fleet of six small coastal gunboats armed with heavy machine guns or light artillery. Facilities include a command post and a few trucks, along with a platoon of infantry with support weapons to provide protection.

CHAPTER TWO

FIREFIGHTS

Like many action heroes, mercs are looking for a fight – the flashier and more destructive, the better! But unlike others, they don't just want a scrap, they want an all-out cinematic *battle*.

It wasn't my style. We're a rescue unit, not assassins.
– Major Dutch Schaefer, in *Predator*

RUNNING A BATTLE

The **Basic ATtack resoLution systEm**, or BATTLE (hey, there's nothing more cinematically appropriate than questionable acronyms!), is a process for resolving small-unit **Action** combat. BATTLE fits somewhere between standard individual combat and the more complex system in **GURPS Mass Combat**, and is specifically designed to describe cinematic action sequences building up to a climactic battle between the heroes and the villain (see *Climactic Battles*, p. 8).

A BATTLE is a *narrative* approach to combat in which a single Quick Contest of **Tactics** between the opposing unit commanders determines the outcome. This is called the BATTLE Roll.

In keeping with its cinematic nature, the BATTLE Roll focuses on the heroes. Each PC dukes it out in a one-off fight scene that contributes what is in effect a complementary skill roll to the commander's BATTLE Roll (see *The Fight Scene in a BATTLE*, below). A PC can use *any* skill . . . Karate, Stealth, Throwing, Thrown Weapon, Explosives, and more can all

help tip the balance! Use the cinematic combat rules from *Exploits*, p. 38 as the mercs combat mook soldiers.

Sum the complementary skill modifiers from all the PCs' fight scenes. Next, apply any BAD – including Combat Zone BAD. While BAD doesn't usually apply to combat, in this case it does, specifically *because* BATTLE is an abstract system. See *How BAD Is It?* (*Exploits*, p. 4) for advice on assessing BAD.

Roll on the *BATTLE Table* (below) to determine each side's casualties. As well, apply the winner's margin of success as a penalty to the loser's *next* BATTLE Roll. Thus, BATTLE results carry over from roll to roll! This is cumulative with Combat Zone BAD, too.

BATTLE Table

Margin	Loser's Casualties	Winner's Casualties
0 (tie)	-10%	-10%
1-4	-20%	-10%
5-7	-30%	-10%
8-10	-40%	-5%
11+	-50%	0%

OPPORTUNITIES

Merc units may enjoy lucky breaks over the course of the adventure. The GM can roll on the *Opportunities Table* (p. 8), choose from it, or make something up, and insert the results into the adventure at random.

The number of opportunities can vary, but for a start try 1d/2, round up.

THE FIGHT SCENE IN A BATTLE

In keeping with the over-the-top explosions and gunplay of cinematic action movies, every *good* BATTLE features a montage of fight scenes, each starring one or more heroes. It's a highlights reel of the mercs using their specialties to help win the larger engagement! The GM should go around the table, giving each player a chance to contribute to the narrative and the final Quick Contest between commanders.

Fight scenes should showcase each hero: A big guy, fast guy, or ninja wipes out mooks in hand-to-hand combat; a shooter cuts down an enemy squad (from the hip, of course!); a demolition man wires a bridge

with explosives; an infiltrator scales a watchtower and eliminates the sentries; and so on. For additional ideas, see *Making Everybody Useful* (*Exploits*, p. 47). Be sure to make liberal use of *Flashy Fighting*, *Sneaky Fighting*, *Extra Effort Rules*, and *Cinematic Combat Rules* (*Exploits*, pp. 37-38)!

It's up to the GM and players to really ham up fight scenes. *Bulletproof Nudity* counts (p. B417), for instance. Good fight scenes earn +1 to the BATTLE Roll; bad ones, -1. The GM should consider giving +2 (equivalent to a critical success) to the *best* fight scene. The further over the top, the better!

Opportunities Table

Roll 3d.

Roll	Type
3-4	Loot
5-6	Kids
7-8	Prisoners
9-11	Arsenal
12-13	Trusty Guide
14	Medic
15-16	Black Box
17	Wild Men
18	Ride

Where appropriate, opportunities are linked to *Sample Assistance* (*Heroes*, pp. 24-25), as shown in **boldface**.

Loot: The mercs luck into a windfall; e.g., gold, relics, or a billionaire's kidnapped granddaughter. If they can escape the combat zone with it, everyone gets the equivalent of 2d months' pay!

Kids: The mercs encounter children whom the bad guys have endangered. Protecting them could justify a Reputation. Or perhaps they're "darn kids" who might be willing to steal something (say, **Files** on the enemy), plant a bomb, etc., if the heroes befriend them.

Prisoners: The mercs find a prison camp or jail with 1d prisoners – or encounter an inattentive enemy patrol of 2d troops. Rescue or capture may provide an in-game reason for acquiring Reputation or Rank, or the prisoners might provide important intelligence, equivalent to **Technical Means**.

Arsenal: The mercs discover a cache of weapons and ammo. Treat as **Replacement Gear**.

Trusty Guide: A local NPC with a Good Reason comes along to help the mercs find their way, avoid a trap, or locate a secret entrance into the enemy camp, with benefits equivalent to **Insertion**.

Medic: The team encounters a friendly group of medicos who'll help patch up their wounded in exchange for protection. These may be Doctors Without Borders treating refugees, independent medical researchers, a ship's doctor, or medical missionaries.

Black Box: The heroes stumble upon a derelict vehicle with an Important Cargo, such as a super-secret flight recorder or radar system. This might provide **Technical Means** now, be traded for a favor or another job later, or just be Loot (above).

GUN FOR HIRE: 37-year-old professional mercenary desires jobs. Vietnam veteran. Discrete and very private. Bodyguard, courier and other special skills. All jobs considered.

– Advertisement in
Soldier of Fortune magazine

Wild Men: The group encounters a squad of jungle tribesmen, friendly soldiers, desert dervishes, urban street rats, etc. who want to help (count as **Backup**). Their main asset is their Area Knowledge.

Ride: Mercs afoot, with a long distance to travel, find a truck, boat, helicopter, or even horses to transport them to the next scene. Treat as **Insertion/Extraction**.

CHALLENGES

Mercs may also face setbacks and problems along the way. The GM can roll on the *Challenges Table* (below), pick what looks fun, or just make stuff up. These things are the **Action** version of kicking in dungeon doors! As such, GMs and players are encouraged not to think *too* much about whether the sequence of the challenges make sense.

Any number of challenges may appear, but 1d is a good start.

Challenges Table

Roll 3d.

Roll	Type	Roll	Type
3-4	Turncoat	14-15	Minefield
5-6	Banzai!	16	Sniper
7-8	Incoming!	17	Heavy Weapon
9-11	Enemy Squad	18	Vehicle
12-13	Traps		

Where challenges are interpreted as *Sample Assistance* (*Heroes*, pp. 24-25) or *Assistance Rolls in Action* (*Exploits*, pp. 44-45), this *benefits the enemy*.

Turncoat: A squaddie, contact, commander, extraction pilot, etc. betrays the group. This could cause problems for the mercs – like leaving them stranded and surrounded by the enemy!

Banzai! A squad of mooks appears suddenly, charging in a human wave, brandishing melee weapons. This gives the mercs a welcome opportunity to defeat the enemy hand-to-hand. *Melee Etiquette* (*Exploits*, p. 38) *definitely* applies!

Incoming! Heavy ordnance is the worst fear of military men. The attack can come from air strikes or artillery; see *Fire Support* (*Exploits*, p. 45). Each merc must make a **Dodge** roll (see *Cinematic Explosions*, *Exploits*, p. 38) or be hit by 1d fragments doing 2d cutting damage apiece.

Climactic Battles

The BATTLE rules help create fun, memorable snapshots of the team's fights in pursuit of justice. Eventually, the mercs fight enough BATTLES (try 1d/2, +1 per -1 BAD) to work up to a final conflict with the villain. In the interests of drama, this should use standard *GURPS* combat – but with lots of *Cinematic Combat Rules* (*Exploits*, p. 38) to ramp up the spectacular nature of the decisive clash! *Dumb Mooks*, *Fast Reloads*, *Mook Marksmanship*, and *Super-Silencers* are especially appropriate.

Enemy Squad: Treat this as **Backup**, except that hostile troops appear *immediately*. They might arrive on foot or in a vehicle (truck, APC, helicopter, etc.).

Traps: Mercs may stumble into any number of traps! **GURPS Action 5: Dictionary of Danger** offers *many* wonderful, horrible options – or see *Setting Traps* (**Exploits**, p. 25). A simple punji pit is common; roll **Vision**-2 to detect it, with failure to notice meaning thrust impaling damage to the victim's foot.

Minefield: The mercs encounter a minefield. Crossing it requires a **Soldier** roll (modified by BAD), with failure inflicting damage as per Incoming! (p. 8). **Explosives (EOD)** can disarm mines, but this takes time and is best done at night to conceal the heroes from the enemy.

Sniper: A well-camouflaged shooter, firing from Long range (**Exploits**, p. 31). Make a **Hearing** roll, or a *Per*-based **Guns** roll at -4, to find direction and distance after each shot; seeing the shooter requires the merc to *win* a Quick Contest of **Vision** or **Observation** vs. the sniper's Camouflage. **Serendipity** can help, too!

Heavy Weapon: A rocket or machine-gun position, with 3-4 crew. Use the stats for the HMG, RPG, or LMG on p. B281. Only the enemy's heads are visible (-5); otherwise, they're protected by a sandbag bunker (DR 36, HP 200).

Vehicle: An enemy vehicle with crew (such as the APC on p. B464) appears, ready to fight. Critical stats are DR and ST/HP. The GM should consider using *Cannon Fodder* (**Exploits**, p. 38) for mook-driven vehicles.

CASUALTIES

Casualties after a BATTLE can be soldiers, civilians, or even important vehicles. Victims might be wounded or killed, whichever is more dramatic. As mooks in cinematic action sometimes survive even the most violent explosions, feel free to interpret casualties as loosely as necessary to create drama and fun. And *PCs* who are casualties in a BATTLE can use *Flesh Wounds* (p. B417) to walk away with only 1 HP of injury!



CHAPTER THREE

LET'S GO HOME . . .

After the battle, the mercs will want to rearm and rest before heading on to their next adventure.

AFTER-ACTION BRIEF

When the battle is over, the mercs' leader will give a report to their employer and turn over any prisoners, captured weapons, intelligence dossiers, etc. This is a good time for employer and commander to agree to *further* missions in the campaign, to add new mercs to the team, and so on.

I SURVIVED UNTIL PAYDAY

If the mercs have a lengthy contract, the GM may decide to use monthly job rolls, treating the mercenaries as freelancers (p. B516). Each merc rolls versus **Soldier**, with critical failure meaning the merc loses a level of Rank or takes 2d injury to a random hit location. Mercs usually get a few days off each month for R&R, to decompress, perhaps spending all their pay. This offers an interesting change of pace for the campaign, switching from battlefield adventures to social encounters "in town."

WHERE TO NEXT?

When the merc team finishes the job, the next task is finding more work (p. 5). The GM may come up with a new conflict zone on their own or generate a fictional one

using the table below. Roll for each of the names, the environment, and the government type (pp. B509-510).

ROLL CREDITS

At the conclusion of a contract, the GM should consider using *After Action (Exploits*, pp. 46-47). Mercs roll against **Soldier**, with the following effects:

Critical Success – Roll 1d: 1-5 means +2 to all ARs next adventure; 6 means promotion (+1 Rank) or a Reputation worth 5 points!

Success – No special effect.

Failure – The mercs get -2 to all ARs next adventure.

Critical Failure – Roll 1d: 1-5 means *no* ARs are allowed next adventure; 6 means demotion (-1 Rank) for those of Rank 2+, or a Reputation worth -5 points!



Random Conflict Zone Table

Roll 1d, 1d for each column.

Roll	Prefix	Suffix	Environment	Government
1-2, 1-2	Tan/Than	Azure	Subarctic Steppe	Dictatorship/Monarchy (CR4)
1-2, 3-4	Bah	-ovia	Temperate	Dictatorship (CR4)
1-2, 5-6	Isla	Verde	Tropical	Representative Democracy (CR4)
3-4, 1-2	Sok-	-orria	Subtropical	Corporate State (CR4)
3-4, 3-4	La	-istan/astan	Desert	Military Government/Junta (CR5)
3-4, 5-6	Bru	-mar	Temperate	Dictatorship (CR5)
5-6, 1-2	Tai	-os	Tropical	Theocracy (CR4)
5-6, 3-4	Val	-vokia	Subarctic Steppe	Socialist (CR5)
5-6, 5-6	Adjik	Rojo	Desert	Dictatorship/Monarchy (CR6)

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